

**CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION**

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August 22, 2002

The Honorable Dede Alpert, Chair  
Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education  
State Capitol, Room 5050  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Senator Alpert:

As you move toward completion of this phase of the adoption of a Master Plan for Education, we offer the following thoughts on the latest draft of the plan:

1. The proposed California Education Commission still appears to be a potentially very costly creation that would have difficulty providing meaningful advice on issues ranging from Pre-K through postsecondary education. Giving clearer direction to and working more closely with existing agencies is likely to produce better results at less expense. (Recommendation 39)
2. The establishment of an “independent” data repository is not likely to enhance the collection, analysis or distribution of information. This proposal fails to address the real issues that pose problems in this area – lack of clarity on what is needed, lack of mandates for the production of specific data, lack of trained people at the collection site, inadequate software and hardware, privacy protections and the independent nature of the vast number of schools and other entities from whom information is desired. (Recommendation 40)
3. Many of the proposals are so specific in nature as to constitute the type of micromanagement that stifles creativity and breeds frustration at a level where things actually get done. Specific examples of this are the proposals to revise the offering of AP credit and directing UC to do certain applied research projects. (Recommendations 13.1 and 50.3)
4. We agree that accountability is crucial. However, in order to have true accountability, there must be precise goals and benchmarks or criteria by which progress in attaining the goals can be measured. We will be happy to work with you to define specific goals and develop the criteria by which progress can be measured. (Recommendation 44)

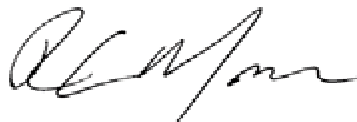
5. Articulation and transfer have posed challenges for students for decades. The discussion of these issues and the associated recommendations in the most recent draft highlights one of the major dilemmas. Faculty must be involved and they have been involved. However, there is much to be done if the barriers to seamless movement within segments and between them are to be realized. A new approach involving faculty must be devised. We stand ready to assist in this endeavor. (Recommendations 12.5, 24, 25, 25.2, and 25.3)

6. Support for the historic one-third, one-eighth split in high school graduates between CSU and UC is appropriate now but this should not be cast in stone since a change may be warranted if programs to increase the eligibility pool are really successful. (Recommendation 13)

7. Giving greater autonomy and authority to the Chancellor and Board of Governors of the Community Colleges will enhance their ability to promote positive change within the "system." The Chancellor and Board have given considerable attention to this issue and are expected to offer some specific proposals during the next legislative session. Structural change will undoubtedly help, but for there to be real power exerted by the Chancellor or Board, there will probably have to be a major shift in the way funds are allocated, with the Board having some control over a substantial enough sum to make a difference in addressing the unique problems confronted by such a diverse array of colleges and programs. (Recommendation 37)

We offer these comments in the spirit of supporting you, your committee and staff as steps are taken to move some of the recommendations forward. We are eager to assist in defining goals, establishing of measurement criteria, and development of specific proposals that will lead to the implementation of the vision set out in the Master Plan.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RL Moore', written in a cursive style.

Robert L. Moore  
Executive Director

cc: Members, Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan  
Stephen Blake, Chief Consultant to the Joint Committee  
Charles Ratliff, Consultant to the Joint Committee

RLM/ag

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July 23, 2002

The Honorable Dede Alpert, Chair  
Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education  
State Capitol, Room 5050  
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Senator Alpert:

I am pleased to share with you the California Postsecondary Education Commission's (CPEC's) response to the first draft of the Master Plan for Education.

On behalf of CPEC, I commend you, the Joint Committee, and staff for placing the focus of this master plan review on the needs of students and seeking to improve the connections between K-12 and higher education. We also want to acknowledge your efforts to involve as many people as possible in the process and your recognition of the important role planning plays in policy development and resource allocation.

At this time, we are primarily addressing the issues that relate directly to the statutory responsibilities assigned to the Commission – recommendations 39, 40 and 41 that deal with planning, coordination, and data collection. The Commission, as set out in the attachment, is also concerned with other recommendations pertaining to higher education and will comment further on those matters if they are included in the next draft of the master plan.

The Commission places great value in having a comprehensive database that enables it to analyze how well educational programs and practices are meeting the needs of students and the broader public interests. We believe that to better serve students, promote future prosperity, and strengthen California's social well being, Californians must demand of their elected officials and policy makers a focus on three priorities:

1. Increasing student access, learning, and degree attainment, from secondary school and college;
2. Building and sustaining seamless learning through coordination and systemic change; and
3. Fostering economic development.

July 23, 2002

Eliminating existing structures and/or creating new ones would be very costly, cause delays in addressing pressing issues, and do little to ensure the attainment of the Joint Committee's vision or our priorities. It is not the structures, programs, or policies that produce results, **it is the people**. There is no reason to believe that the structures currently in place to deal with planning, coordination, and data handling are so inherently flawed as to render them incapable of taking the action necessary to pursue the vision set out by the Joint Committee. There is every reason to believe that with clarity of purpose, exemplary leadership, and sufficient support from the Governor and the legislature, the existing agencies, entities and structures can lead the way towards attainment of the vision.

Concentrating on structures is akin to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. Focusing on the people is akin to steering the ship so as to avoid a collision. With proper guidance, oversight and support, capable people will accomplish what is wanted and needed without having to reorganize or create new agencies, entities or structures.

We want to express, in the most sincere way possible, our desire and interest in working with you, the Joint Committee, its staff, and others in helping to shape the future of education in the state. We are committed to improving and expanding educational opportunity and achievement for all Californians, regardless of their socio-economic status, geographic location, or any other factor. We look forward to joining with you as you move toward the adoption and implementation of a California Master Plan for Education.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RL Moore', written in a cursive style.

Robert L. Moore  
Interim Executive Director

cc: Members, Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan  
Stephen Blake, Chief Consultant to the Joint Committee  
Charles Ratliff, Consultant to the Joint Committee

Attachment

**Attachment**  
**California Postsecondary Education Commission**  
**Comments on the May 2002 draft**  
***California Master Plan for Education***

Our comments at this time are directed primarily to the recommendations that directly relate to the mission of the Commission. We are interested in a number of other recommendations, particularly those concerning articulation, curriculum, funding, leadership and Community College governance. We will comment on those and perhaps other matters as appropriate after we review the next draft.

The proposed new Master Plan is offered as a blue print for the future of California's education enterprise. It seeks to create an integrated system of educational entities that uses resources effectively by focusing on the important needs of the people of our State. The draft report is aimed at maximizing student access to this enterprise and increasing student success.

We also believe that the draft report, while not saying it precisely, implies that there is a need to have a master plan for education, pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade - that will enable the public schools to advance successfully toward the achievement levels envisioned for the State's schools. Such a perspective is, in our minds, a laudable one and is different than an integrated plan for all of education – preK through 20. The State's Master Plan for Higher Education has served as a foundational document in the history of the State's higher education system for over 40 years.

The draft report, while on the one hand seeming to push for integration of the two educational systems, on the other hand, has recommendations that are more focused on ensuring that there is a coordinated approach between the two systems. The Commission has focused its attention on the latter, as it believes that due to multiple factors – history, law, Constitutional prerogatives, funding mechanisms, the role of the State in providing educational opportunity, the size and scope of the educational components of California's educational enterprise, the Statewide, regional, and local educational needs, and other factors - that the focus should be on the development of a Master Plan for preK-12 Education and coordinating such a plan with the higher education system in a timely and cost effective manner. Thus, many of our recommendations focus on such a perspective.

Furthermore, the draft report, in identifying the “compelling reasons” in the Introduction statement emphasizes the fragmentation and dysfunctional aspects of preK through 12<sup>th</sup> grade and tangentially references higher education. That is not to say that there are not challenges and opportunities within higher education or areas in need of attention.

The Commission believes there are areas that need immediate attention, and that it should be empowered to continue its efforts in advising the Governor, Legislature, the higher education segments themselves, and the public on policy analysis and recommendations for the improvement of the system. The Commission's analysis and recommendations

contained herein are intended to address the issues raised in the draft report pertaining to the vital issues of planning, coordination and data handling and are intended to advance the State and its educational enterprise toward a more focused, coordinated system.

### **General comments**

These comments are limited to recommendations 39 through 41 of the draft dated May 2002. We are focusing on these particular recommendations because they are squarely within our area of expertise and have far reaching implications for the mission assigned to this agency.

We share the Joint Committee's determination to place the interests of students and the people of California above all else. We concur with the vision of having "a cohesive system of first rate schools, colleges, and universities that prepares all students for transition to and success in the next level of education, the workforce, and general society, and that is responsive to the changing needs of our state and our people".

We also commend the Joint Committee for recognizing and acknowledging that careful data collection and analysis, planning, and coordination are essential to realization of this vision. The Commission's commitment to the concepts embodied in this draft is reflected in its adoption of a Public Agenda that was distributed to the members and staff of the Joint Committee earlier this year.

As much as we agree in principle with much of what the Joint Committee is seeking to accomplish, we strongly disagree with the premise underlying recommendations 39 through 41 and with the proposed remedies. Specifically, we take issue with the notion that creating a new agency to provide fiscal and policy advice pre-kindergarten through university as well as assuming other responsibilities currently assigned to the Commission will aid in the attainment of the Committee's vision or that having a separate data collection agency will result in the better acquisition or use of information.

We further disagree with the following unsubstantiated contentions that: "a structural conflict exists when a single entity is responsible both for coordination and ... for planning" (page 57); its (the Commission's) composition brings too many vested interests together to govern themselves" (page 58); "Lack of coordination among the State's multiple education agencies is the largest systemic governance problem in California"(page 58); "information cannot be integrated"(page 58); there is a "need for an independent entity to be assigned responsibility for data collection and maintenance" (page 58); or legitimate doubt exists as to "the ability of any existing entity to assume this (data collection and maintenance) responsibility, due to *perceived conflicts of functions* in each of those entities.(page 58)"

The Commission firmly stands by the principles that applied when it came into existence almost 30 years ago and which have been reaffirmed in many legislative enactments during the intervening years, including numerous reviews of the "Master Plan" – namely, that this independent Commission, comprised primarily of and governed by a majority of

lay representatives, and granted broad authority to gather and analyze data, plan and coordinate is fully capable of assisting the Legislature and Governor in shaping educational policies that will best meet the learning needs of students and provide prudent use of available resources. Rather than a conflict between functions we perceive an indispensable reinforcement between the functions of data collection and maintenance and the analysis and application of the information to policy issues. Surely the value of this reinforcement outweighs any perceived conflict that (in any event) is not to be resolved by isolating the data collection responsibility, given public disclosure laws.

The Commission takes the position that the vision set forth by the Joint Committee can best be achieved by having the Legislature and Governor reaffirm the coordinating role of Commission among several governing entities of education (P through 20) and hold it accountable for performing those tasks, activities and responsibilities that will best enable policy makers to effectively shape and pursue the educational policies deemed critical to Access, Achievement, Accountability, and Affordability.

In support of our position we offer the following observations, opinions and facts:

1. People make the real difference. Supportive structures, policies, procedures, processes and practices certainly contribute to success but without capable and committed individuals little can be accomplished. Whether it is in the classroom, administration office, governing body, legislature or governor's office, a person's level of ability to do what is needed and the commitment to doing one's best will ultimately determine whether a goal or vision will be achieved.
2. There is ample evidence that effective working relationships between educational segments and institutions at all levels benefits students. There is also evidence that a commitment from key leaders at the state level to push for cooperation and coordination produces results and, absent that commitment, nothing else will.
3. There does not appear to be any particular oversight structure that assures effective connections between or across educational segments or systems. Maryland enjoys effective K-16 linkages with a voluntary structure, Florida is having success with a rigid governance structure, and Virginia's formal structure has so far failed to produce the desired coordination.
4. There is no reason to think that separating the functions that now reside in the Commission will improve responsiveness to data requests since the data once submitted would presumably be shared among public entities. On the other hand data collection for its own sake is a sterile exercise.
5. The Commission's ability to gather, analyze and disseminate data is exceptional and widely praised. There are constant changes and improvements in the amount, quality and timeliness of available data. The Commission's staff continuously updates and upgrades the databases used by the research staff to fulfill the analysis, evaluation and reporting responsibilities of the Commission.

6. The 1960 Master Plan explicitly rejected the alternative of a Master Board for the governance of higher education. Instead it recommended an advisory body (the Coordinating Council) to provide effective planning and coordination. The Legislature, in response to that recommendation, created a lay body broadly representative of the several segments including the K-12 system.
7. Over the years the perspective of the Commission has necessarily broadened to take account of the growth and diversification of the education enterprise. Today, the scope of education in California spans segments not dreamt of by the Master Plan Liaison Committee. Beyond the five segments represented on the Coordinating Council (UC, CSU, CCC, AICCU, K-12) increasing shares of the postsecondary enterprise belong to private vocational schools (State approved and nationally accredited) and to out-of-state regionally accredited degree-granting institutions. This broader perspective should perhaps be formalized by expanding the representation of the Commission to encompass these other segments.
8. A seamless system is a worthy theoretical goal, but it should not be taken to imply sameness among the distinct segments of California's education enterprise. The Master Plan's differentiation of function demands that transition from one segment to another entail unavoidable discontinuities. Progression through the system implies hard work and achievement. Unnecessary, rigid requirements should be eliminated, but rigorous expectations of the student must not be compromised to the interest of efficiency. The Commission believes (as did the Liaison Committee) that progress towards this goal can best be assured by a broadly empowered coordinating entity working in concert with the several governing entities that make up the education system of California.

### **Specific response to recommendations 39 through 41**

**Recommendation 39** proposes to replace the California Postsecondary Education Commission with a new entity called the California Education Commission which would be responsible for:

1. Providing policy and fiscal advice on issues affecting pre-kindergarten through university;
2. Approving postsecondary education programs; and
3. Reviewing and approving new public campuses.

The apparent basis for this recommendation is that such an entity would generate better connections/cooperation between pre-k through 12 and postsecondary education. No evidence is given to support this assertion and there is no mention of where this recommendation originated. This proposal was not part of the Governance Work Group report.



In addition to the preceding comments and observations, the Commission opposes this recommendation for the following reasons:

1. There is no compelling evidence to support the creation of a such an entity;
2. There is an existing entity, the California Education Roundtable, that can address the linkage issue;
3. Having a single commission trying to deal with all of public education would likely result in K-12 issues consuming the bulk of the attention given the myriad complex issues in a segment where education is mandatory;
4. The projected growth in postsecondary education along with increasing access, affordability, equity, quality, and accountability issues will demand more attention from a planning and coordination agency during the next 5 to 10 years than at any time in recent history;
5. People make the real difference. Merely creating a new structure will do little or nothing. Having capable people who are committed to improving the situation is what needed and that can be achieved with existing structures if the focus is on holding the individuals currently responsible for dealing with educational planning and coordination accountable for doing what is needed.
6. Excluding segmental representatives from a planning and coordinating body would harm rather than enhance performance. These representatives bring critical knowledge to the deliberation of issues and benefit from participating in discussions on educational issues that transcend their respective segments. Concerns about these representatives having undue influence are unwarranted. They are public members of their respective governing entities, they are not permitted to hold leadership positions, they make up less than 1/3 of the membership, they are not unified on issues, and they are generally committed to taking a broader perspective than just the interest of the segment they represent.

**Recommendation 40** proposes assigning coordination responsibility for preschool through university to the Governor. The apparent basis for this recommendation is that the Governor has the most power over the segments.

The following issues are raised by this proposal:

1. There is no discussion of what "coordination" means in this recommendation. The earlier recommendation, #39, proposed having the new planning entity do program and campus approval, functions which are generally considered to be coordination;
2. The agency responsible for planning will have an understanding of where coordination is important and would be a logical entity to have such responsibility.
3. There will be greater continuity of focus and effort as well as policy oriented legislative oversight if the coordinating role is independent from the Governor or the legislature.

**Recommendation 41** proposes that some "objective, independent entity" be charged with the sole responsibility of gathering and maintaining comprehensive data for all of California's education system.

The Commission is opposed to this recommendation for the following reasons:

1. It is unclear what such an entity would accomplish since there will always be numerous agencies at the local, state and federal level with a need and the authority to collect data.
2. Separating the data collection function from the agency responsible for using the data creates potential problems with the timely delivery of information and is likely to increase costs.
3. When the agency responsible for using the data is charged with the responsibility for acquiring it, considerable attention is given to the appropriateness and quality of the data to be collected.
4. Current data gathering and handling procedures have resulted in the Commission having one of the largest, most complete and most accessible educational databases in the country. Great progress has been made during the past few years in having a comprehensive data collection system that spans all educational segments and allows for longitudinal studies of students as they progress through the educational "system."

## **Summary**

Higher education in California is a vital resource, one that should be shared with and work in collaboration with all other levels of education. California does not need a buffer like the proposed California Education Commission, plus a Data Collection entity plus other entities to plan and coordinate. California needs a bridge to enable more Californians to access its greatest gift: lifelong learning. A rejuvenated and supported California Postsecondary Education Commission will accomplish such a goal and is already well positioned to do so.

A reorganization of the structure that exists, absent the other systemic changes and Constitutional changes required, will only prolong existing issues. History nationally shows that it takes at least 5 to 8 years for organizational changes to begin to show any modifications. California can't wait that long nor does it need to. Rather, it should support and hold accountable its existing vehicles for such change while providing the necessary authority and resources.

There is a need for greater accountability and more coordination. There is no question that the educational system needs to evolve to keep abreast of the changing challenges facing our State. In today's world, where students must earn more than a high school diploma for real-world success, we can't afford to isolate students in separate education boxes. Change is under way. What is needed now is careful evaluation of many recently enacted programs, thoughtful consideration of how to build upon what works, redirection

of resources from efforts that are not contributing to student success, and patience to allow those programs that appear successful to run their course before being unfunded, restructured or otherwise diverted from doing what seems to work or have a excellent potential to accomplished the desired goal.

The success of California's colleges and universities is very dependent on the quality of education in public schools and community colleges. Efforts must continue to achieve greater coordination and communication and break down barriers that separate the systems and present unwarranted hurdles to student achievement.

The bottom line: enhanced legislative and gubernatorial guidance, oversight and support for the existing structures responsible for planning, coordination and data handling will be the most effective, expedient and cost efficient way to accomplish the Joint Committee's vision.